



FIDDLE

Improvising from the Beginning Jazz String Curriculum for 4th, 5th and 6th Grade String Orchestra

Part 11: Ornamentation of Guide Lines

by Cristina Seaborn

Learn how to improvise from the ground up, and build a strong foundation of rhythm, melody, harmony and form. In a series of articles on basic instruction you can give to your 4th, 5th and 6th grade beginning orchestra students, we will be learning how to play accompaniment parts while half the group practices improvisation all at once. This will be a safe place for you and your students to experiment for the first time with spontaneous composition. You will be able to model this for your students, one step at a time. This table of contents lists the series of lesson plans that will come out, one topic in each String Notes magazine article:

- Sound and Silence
- Melody and Chord Progression
- Long and Short Melodies
- Rhythm
- Groove
- Ornamentation of Melody and Rhythm
- Melody Notes Outside of the Chord
- Preparing for Harmonic Change
- Chord Tones
- Guide Tone Lines
- Ornamentation of Guide Tone Lines
- Harmonic Progression

Ornamentation of a guide tone line means adding melody to a simple guide tone line. You can make this as simple or complex rhythmically and melodically as suits your taste. This will sound like an improvised solo, with a solid backbone of notes from the chord to ground the solo melodically and harmonically. By rhythmically anticipating the downbeat, you will give forward movement to your solo or improvisation. It is best to keep the guide tone line as close to the previous guide tone line note as possible. When creating your ornamented guide tone line, leap to larger intervals on a chord change rather than in the middle of a measure having the same chord. Another spot to have a large leap is at the beginning of a new four-measure phrase.

See *Fox on the Run* on the next page.

Exercise #1

Write out the guide tone line of the chord progression using whole notes and half notes. Play the guide tone line on your instrument. Then write out an embellished

guide tone line, adding some rests, quarter notes, and eighth notes. Use the idea of only using a large interval leap at the beginning of a new four-measure phrase.

Exercise #2

Improvise using your guide tone line as a starting place.

Exercise #3

Using a standard bluegrass, rock, or jazz tune, use the guide tone line with the idea of a starting note (measure 1) and a note you are aiming towards (measure 2) in your improvisation. Have variety in the rhythm, with simpler rhythm in some sections, and complex rhythm in others. Be sure to include some rests and breathe into the music, as a vocalist would sing the melody.

I use the idea of ornamentation of the guide tone line in my improvisation all the time, with a conscious understanding of the melody and the chord progression. I intentionally will make my improvisation simple or complex, usually in that order.

The idea of building on a song makes sense most of the time, keeping the rhythm sparse in the beginning, and saving more layers of instruments and complex rhythms for the last time through the song. This makes for a great splash of an ending!

Expert at fiddling and jazz improvisation, Cristina Seaborn holds a Bachelor of Music Degree in jazz violin performance from Berklee College of Music in Boston, and a Masters in Conducting for Orchestra from St. Cloud State University. She has produced an instructional video for fiddling through Mel Bay entitled Anyone Can Play Country Fiddle, CDs entitled Inside the Heart of a Musician, Seaborn Breeze, and Spirit Wind, and many arrangements for string orchestra of fiddle music, jazz, Celtic, Scandinavian, Cajun and original. Cristina is a fiddler with over thirty years of experience. In symphonies, quartets, jazz ensembles, and folk/rock bands, her musical background includes influences in classical, jazz, Celtic, bluegrass and Texas swing fiddle. ♪